

NEW EYES WISDOM

Using PIP with Young Children

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Elders in a community bring Old Eyes Wisdom, that wisdom that comes from years of observation, experience, and reflection. New Eyes Wisdom is that open, spontaneous, fresh approach that children bring to their learning. Sometimes a situation calls for more Old Eyes Wisdom. Sometimes a situation can't move forward without New Eyes Wisdom. Most situations benefit from both. For several years as an Early Childhood Educator (ages 3-6), I enjoyed joining my "Old Eyes" to the many pairs of New Eyes in my classes.

Early Childhood Education provides a natural home for The Past is Prologue. Common elements include self-directed, experiential learning (learning from the inside out), and an environment where children learn how to listen, share and cooperate with diverse others in a community. At The Circle School, where I worked as both a teacher and director, children began to hear the Learning Story *Who Speaks for Wolf* at age three, sitting in a big morning circle. I was an "intergenerational" circle joined by all the teachers and students from pre-kinder through fifth grade. Each child related to the story in his or her own special way - some were fascinated by Wolf and wanted to howl! One four year old exclaimed, "*Who Speaks for Wolf* is about -- the World!!"

Because each group of children is difference, The Circle School has never written a set curriculum for using PIP with young children, but here are the kinds of activities Old Eyes and New Eyes have enjoyed --

Becoming a Wolf Clan

Every morning for a week, the children listen to a teacher tell *Who Speaks for Wolf* orally. Throughout the week the teacher shares many other picture and photo books about wolves. The children learn that wolves live in families, or clans, much like human beings. With the teacher playing a wise and caring alpha wolf, the children play at being a wolf clan. The group listens to a tape of wolves recorded in the wild -- some of the howls sound scary! The group practices howling together. We pint wolves and make clay wolves. We make wolf masks and dance a wolf dance.

Listening to Mother Earth

Once a week, the class visits a nearby field for a quiet walk. No talking at first! Or only soft whispers. Footsteps are slow and gentle as if to kiss the earth. We stop to hug trees, pick up interesting stones, watch a busy insect. After several minutes, the group sits in a circle on the ground and we share what we hear Mother Earth saying. The teacher writes these thoughts down to make a Listening to Motor Earth group poem. Visiting the same place over a year's time, we become a part of this special place. It becomes a familiar place where we are always discovering new things.

Building a Central Fire

To introduce Central Fire, we plan an outing to a park and build an actual fire. Each child collects and contributes tinder and kindling. Sitting in a circle around the fire, the teacher tells *Who Speaks for Wolf*. Sitting by our own fire, it is very easy to imagine Grandfather and Boy of Eight Winters. Afterwards, whenever we want to create a Central Fire for ourselves, we remember our day at the park, how we all worked together, how good it felt to sit around the warmth of that fire together

Medicine Wheel (This activity supposes the teacher has received training in the Great Hoop of Life, by Paula Underwood)

The teacher creates a circle (about a foot in diameter) out of wood or cardboard and marks the Four Directions. Once a week, the class decides on an object from nature to place in the center of the circle (a pine cone, a rock, a fossil, a living plant ...). Assisted by the teacher, the group sits in a circle with the object placed in the center. The object is looked at from the perspective of the Four Directions. From the viewpoint of the *East* we are *Inspired* by the object's beauty or curious characteristics. In the *South* we *Grow* by learning all we can about it, sharing our thoughts, experiences, looking it up in books, etc. In the *West* we *Reflect* on what we have learned and perhaps write a group poem or story about it. In the *North* we celebrate our new *Wisdom* perhaps with a tea party with the natural object the guest of honor!

Three Sisters Feast

We cook a feast to celebrate the Three Sisters. Popcorn or cornbread and pumpkin bread are fun and easy for young children to cook. Teacher can bring a pot of beans. It's nice to invite another class to come share the feast.

The Rule of Six

An unusual object(s) may appear on a table in one of the classroom's learning centers. An odd-looking kitchen utensil, a handloom, an artist's tool are possibilities. A Rule of Six game follows! What could this be? How many different ways could it be used? Because young children love to do concrete things with their hands, it is natural to introduce Rule of Six through simple hand tools. After or during the discussion, let the children try out as many of their ideas as possible.

Another way to play Rule of Six is to show the children an art print and have them brainstorm their many interpretations of what the picture is trying to say and how the artist created it. Everyone's ideas are valued. Compare the picture to Central Fire -- how looking at a picture gathers all our different ideas together in a special sharing. This activity should always end with the children making their own art creations!